

Final Report

Title:	Delta Farming Start		
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Funding Source	Non Formula	Reporting Frequency	Final
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Submitted By	Donald Green	Date Submitted to NIFA	07/20/2016

Program Code: BFRDP**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher**Project Director**

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Recipient Organization

MISSISSIPPI DELTA COUNCIL FOR FARM

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DUNS No. 071526003

Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

Johnson, Walter

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

Project Summary - Title: Delta Farming Start Development Program Project Director: Donald Green, Executive Director Applicant institution: Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc. Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc. 100% budget allocated Abstract. MDC/FWOI proposes a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program - Delta Farming Start. This 12-month development program will (1) sustain and enhance important collaborations and innovative activities relevant to beginning farmer and rancher programs; and (2) initiate and develop beginning farmer and rancher project ideas to lead to future program success or success in obtaining other grants for beginning farmer and rancher education. Over 12 months, the Delta Farming Start project will pilot technical assistance, apprenticeships, mentoring, and intensive, targeted training in farming practice and management, business, and other critical areas to 6 selected participants who represent limited resource, socially-disadvantaged farm and ranch or farm labor backgrounds. Project participants completing the pilot program will feedback and suggested modifications regarding identified pilot curriculum and training program modifications. Additionally, pilot participants will: 1) be prepared to start small independent farm operations or other agriculture-related self-employment, 2) grow or diversify limited resource farming operations, or 3) otherwise gain full-time, secure employment in larger agricultural operations. Delta Farming Start proposed strategies will enable MDC/FWOI to focus on organizational capacity building, relationship building and resource development to ensure successful deployment of a future BFRDP program. Partnerships and Collaboration - The Steering Committee will be actively involved in partnership and collaboration that will further the purposes of the Delta Farm Start Development Program, additionally, 1) Alcorn State University will provide initial agricultural operations curriculum for review and pilot, 2) PMHDC will provide micro lending TA services for the Delta Farming Start Development Program, PMHDC will also provide training and technical assistance to modify existing curriculum creating a loans and financing component for Mississippi Beginning Farms and Ranches as part of MDC/FWOI's final core curriculum. 3) Southern Bancorp has been invited to provide microlending services, draft MOU is included, and 4) Danita Rodriguez & Associates will design and implement the final evaluation plan in collaboration with MDC/FWOI. (For additional details regarding Partnerships, please see attached MOUs included in Collaborative Arrangements) MDC/FWOI has served the people of the Mississippi Delta since its founding in 1971, providing employment training and support to over 58,000 individuals, with a mission of increasing opportunity for farm workers and supporting agricultural life ways. Budget request: \$70,150

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Accomplishments**Major goals of the project**

Objective 1: Establish Delta Farm Start development program, including program staff and finalizing contracts with identified program partners Objective 2: Organization Partners/Relationship Development, A Steering Committee of regional and national experts will be charged with facilitating increased collaboration between minority and limited resource producers, regional nonprofit organizations and universities, strengthen existing networks and expertise of producers and their communities and customers, identify niche markets, value-added production opportunities, direct marketing techniques targeting customers, address the structural and technical challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable production, and options to facilitate alternative production methods. Objective 3: Organizational Capacity Building and Resource Development, both organizationally as well as program specific, which goes hand in hand with Objective 2, relationship development. Objective 4: Pilot a combination of the components proposed in the original plan for 6 farmers/ranchers (See project narrative for potential course titles and identified best practices curriculum model.) Objective 5: Evaluation Key evaluation questions will include: a. Given the resources invested, are the planned outputs been created, and the impact on the target groups' acceptable b. How relevant are the project interventions for the target beneficiaries in the current context, i.e. small, resource limited, socially disadvantaged farmers c. Does the pilot demonstrate the potential that the number of agricultural operations in crisis throughout the targeted service area will be reduced d. What are the best mechanisms for reaching targeted resource limited farmers, especially women and minorities, and making the most impact on their economic wellbeing e. How can project mechanisms and processes be adapted to better serve participants f. How sustainable is the project Is management structure appropriate Anticipated Outcomes: a. A farming enterprise training model (new curricula/resources) tailored to the needs of low resource rural Mississippi Delta farmworkers and owner/operators. b. Pilot participants will develop the knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural success, and will contribute to household food security and local economic sustainability. c. Participants will be matched to two mentors each and will receive advice and technical assistance. d. 1-2 business plans to start or expand farms or create agriculture microenterprise will be developed by Pilot Participants e. 1-2 business plans will be considered for micro loans by Southern BanCorp, a CDFI serving the Delta region of Mississippi. f. 1 farm start and 1 agriculture related business starts are anticipated g. 2 open-forum sessions will be provided to the community to provide information to anyone interested in beginning farming and agricultural microenterprise. h. Up to 6 spouses or other adult members of Participants' households will be offered training and job referrals i. 100 farmworkers and operator/owners will be reached about farm operator/ownership opportunities and related resources.

What was accomplished under these goals?

MDC BFRDP Pilot Project introduced and tested an "Estimated Profit" training component as part of the 2-Day Delta Farm Start curriculum. This component showed very promising results when piloted by MDC Delta Farm Start. The participants were able to determine during a 1.5 hour session if their new farming venture or their idea for additional income stream was not only viable, but they were able to determine their total earning potential based on the infusion of a \$500 micro-grant, funds to be used to implement their new farming venture or new product/income stream. The "Estimated Profit" training component was accessible for all participants, even those who had very limited reading/writing skills. The success of this customized training component is demonstrated by the **MDC Delta Farm Start's Return on Investment** detail:

A. Delta Farm Start Micro-Grant Benefit / Cost Ratio Calculation:

$\$2898/\$500 = \$5.79 \times 100 = 579\%$ ROI Per Participant, therefore for each \$1 provided for participant micro-grants, **\$5.79 was returned to the participant.**

Participants earned benefit between April and November of 2013.

Over 90% of micro-grants were used to enhance or expand livestock enclosures. These expenses were one-time fees used to acquire durable materials or equipment. These expanded and enhanced livestock enclosures or equipment will sustain each participants benefit annually for no less than 3 years. Therefore **USDAs return on investment for the MDC BFRDP Delta Farm Start project can be calculated as follows:**

Average Net Benefit Per Participant: \$2898
Cost of Biz Plan Implementation: \$ 500

Benefit / Cost Ratio Calculation:

$\$2898/\$500 = 5.79 \times 100 = 579\%$ ROI Per Participant, therefore for each \$1 provided for participant micro-grants, **\$5.79 was returned to the participant.**

The total ROI of \$34,774 for all 12 participants and total economic impact on the community of \$56,500 occurred between April and November of 2013.

The ongoing ROI would occur between April and November of 2014 for the 12 initial pilot project participants, doubling the initial ROI and would continue to deliver this demonstrated ROI for no less than 3 years.

B. USDA's ROI for Delta Farm Start Pilot Project

USDA's ROI for the initial \$70,150 in this pilot project, over a 3 year period, with no additional investment on the part of

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USDA, is anticipated to be: **\$104,332 for the initial 12 pilot project participants and \$169,500 total economic impact on the community.**

Over a 3 year period, USDA's Benefit Cost Ratio is $273,832/70,150 = 3.90 \times 100 = 390\%$ ROI

For every \$1 USDA invested in the MDC BFRDP pilot project \$3.90 will be returned in economic development to the participants and communities of the Mississippi Delta.

Participant Highlight(s):

Like many small family farmers in Mississippi, Lilly Melton integrates several diverse enterprises to ensure her continued ability to keep farming as a way to augment her annual household income. "We look for things we can do to keep farming on the land I inherited from my parents," Lilly said, this includes herself and her three children. "I want something that'll keep what I learned from my parents alive." Lilly also has about 16 cows and 1 steer as well as goats. The Meltons also grow organic produce to sell at the MDCFWOI Crossroads Farmers Market, as well as two other farmers markets in nearby counties.

Of all those efforts, Lilly points to her poultry operation as a remarkably dependable source of income. However, she had not ever been able to enclose her chicken coop or grazing area. Therefore, she would consistently lose a minimum of 3-4 chickens per week. The result of her inability to secure her laying hens meant that she was never able to build up to more than approximately 35 laying hens at any given time.

The MDC Delta Farm Start Pilot Project awarded Lilly Melton a \$500 micro-grant to enable her to secure her chickens. Lilly currently has 135 laying hens and predicts that she will have 200 active laying hens by mid-December, 2013. (See Attachment 2 - Photo of Lilly Melton's newly secured chicken enclosure.)

- Ms. Melton orders Chicks, 30 at a time, \$2.70 per chick. After chickens have completed a 34 week laying period, they are sold as broiler chickens at market rate.

- Chickens molt at 52 weeks less 18 weeks before they are able to begin laying eggs - 34 weeks of laying per chicken per year, 4-5 eggs are laid per week.

- 136 to 170 eggs per hen per year = 11 - 14 dozen eggs per year per chicken.

- 11 dozen @ \$2 per dozen = \$22 14 dozen @ \$2 per dozen = \$28

- \$22 - \$28 Gross per chicken per year x 135 chickens = \$2,970 - \$3,780 per year Gross earnings on 135 chickens.

- 200 chickens: \$4,400 - \$5,600 Gross earnings per year

- 2013 US Broiler Chicken Wholesale Price / Lb.: \$1.04

- 2013 US Broiler Chicken Average Weight: 5.90 lbs. = Average Gross per Chicken: \$6.14 less cost per chick: \$3.44 average net gain on each chicken sold after molting

- \$464 (135 chickens) - \$688 (200 chickens) net gain on chickens sold after molting annually.

Total annual chicken earnings due to enclosed coop: \$3,434 - \$6,288

- Without closing in chicken coop, Lilly was only able to keep the quantity of laying hens up to 35 hens, total annual Gross earnings of \$890.40 - \$1,100.40, including both eggs and selling each laying hen after molting as a broiler.

- With her newly secured chicken enclosure, Lilly was able to increase her total number of laying hens by 100, increasing her Gross annual income by 290% - 473% depending on the number of eggs each chicken lays each week.

After completing the "Estimated Profit" section of the MDC Delta Farm Start training, Ms. Melton was able to identify her chicken enclosure as the activity that would result in the highest ROI and therefore would increase her annual income substantially in the first season and would continue to do so with no additional investment in the upcoming 3-5 seasons.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

Project staff all attended the BFRDP 2013 4th Annual Project Director Meeting - November 13-16, 2013, in McAllen, Texas.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

The project participated in the Poster Presentation component of the BFRDP 2013 4th Annual Project Director Meeting - November 13-16, 2013, in McAllen, Texas.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

This was a 12 month pilot project.

Participants

{Nothing to report}

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Target Audience**Target Audience:**

Number of workshops & training programs produced (Pilot Project):

- a. Face-to-face (excluding college credit courses) -
 - i. 21 beneficiaries received 1-on-1 coaching using training materials Feb - Sept 2013
 - ii. 21 beneficiaries received 4 days of classroom training in February 2013

Numbers and demographics of participants attending face-to-face or internet based workshops & training programs:

1. Socially disadvantaged - 100%
2. Limited Resource - 100%
3. Farm workers --15
4. Females - 75%
5. Currently farming / ranching -100%
6. Farming / ranching **independently** less than one year - 20%

Efforts:

Efforts included the development of specific curriculum that was accessible to both literate participants and those with limited literacy as well as formal classroom instruction and partnering with Alcorn State University and Tougaloo College Ag Extension outreach services providing on site soil testing and specific soil treatment/conditioning for individual participants.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

MDC BFRDP Pilot Project introduced and tested an "Estimated Profit" training component as part of the 2-Day Delta Farm Start Curriculum. This component showed very promising results when piloted by MDC Delta Farm Start. The participants were able to determine during a 1.5 hour session if their new farming venture or their idea for additional income stream was not only viable, but they were able to determine their total earning potential based on the infusion of a \$500 micro-grant, funds to be used to implement their new farming venture or new product/income stream. The "Estimated Profit" training component was accessible for all participants, even those who had very limited reading/writing skills. The success of this customized training component is demonstrated by an average 579% ROI for pilot participants that implemented their farming venture, therefore for each \$1 provided for participant micro-grants, \$5.79 was returned to the participant.

Changes/Problems**Participant Feedback/Recommendations:**

Participants have consistently made the following 2 recommendations -

- Schedule classroom training earlier in the year to ensure participants are able to launch new business ventures before work season begins.
- Develop additional resources to enable more micro-grant beneficiaries each year.